

EXPERT HEURISTIC EVALUATION

1) What interface did you choose to evaluate? Why did you choose to evaluate it? What are specific aspects of the interface that you hope to learn more about?

I chose to evaluate Craigslist because the website is amongst the most popular online platforms for posting classified ads and it attracts users from nearly 70 countries, receiving more than 250 million visits per month. The website offers more than 80 million classified ad postings and may be accessed in 14 different languages. Craigslist posts over 1 million jobs each month in various categories such as accounting, marketing, software, etc. Considering its extensive use, a heuristic evaluation of the popular platform could help find areas of improvement, in turn benefitting users. Although the platform is a success, its website is outdated and inconsistent with current websites which results in a lack of appeal to new users.

Although the text-based design seems straightforward, it makes it difficult for users to navigate the website. Additionally, it is tough to utilize due to the limited account features and restricted comparison of advertisement posts. I wanted to particularly learn about whether the lack of modern UI elements like buttons, icons and use of color hinders task efficiency for users.

Website link : <https://newyork.craigslist.org/>

2) Who would be the typical users for this type of interface? Please discuss their age, computing experience, computing environment, job responsibility, and education level.

The United States ranks first in terms of traffic to Craigslist, followed by Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico, and India. With a gender mix of 63% male and 37% female, the bulk of website visitors are aged 25 to 40. Contrary to rural populations, urban and suburban residents are observed to use the online classified advertising platform more frequently. Individuals with low-mid computing experience are also typical users due to the straightforward layout. Users within low- mid income brackets visit the website more frequently as the platform is popular for buying and selling second hand goods. Young individuals who are moving to a new city, seeking new employment, shopping for inexpensive things, or looking for roommates find the website particularly useful. Job seekers.

3) Briefly describe some common tasks a user would perform using the interface including the task goals. Indicate which tasks you will be exploring with the evaluations.

Common tasks that people perform on Craigslist include 1) creating and posting an ad to sell a product/provide a service. 2) browsing categories, searching and filtering within the website with the goal of buying a specific product they need. Popular categories are furniture, electronics,

automobiles and parts, jewelry, video games, etc 3) searching for jobs in various fields like accounting, customer care, software, marketing as well as part-time, one time gigs. 4) Finding contact information and reaching out to the ad host with the goal of buying a particular product, providing a service or applying to a job posting. 5) The users also visit discussion forums to host discussions, seek answers, reply to posts on various topics and community-related events with a goal of socializing, seeking help and providing knowledge.

The tasks i chose to evaluate were:

1. Logging in to User account
2. Creating a post
3. Searching, filtering for an apartment on sale
4. Looking for Job employment in a particular industry (accounting)

The reason I chose these tasks was as they would broadly cover tasks a typical user might want to achieve, allowing me to broadly inspect the websites through the lens of a job seeker, ad host, and a customer and determine common usability problems faced.

4)Which set of heuristics did you use for the heuristic evaluation, and why did you choose those?

I chose Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design for the heuristic evaluation. I found these heuristics were an effective guide for evaluating the Craigslist website with rules that were broad enough to inspect the overall interface. The 'consistency and standards' heuristic guided me to holistically inspect the UI across screens and devices as well as compare the UI with current industry standards. Additionally they were specific enough to help me spot minute errors, for example, the 'help and documentation' heuristic allowed me to spot errors in the FAQ and about pages that i might have overlooked at a first glance.

5) Heuristic evaluation using Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design

#1: Visibility of system status

Problems identified:

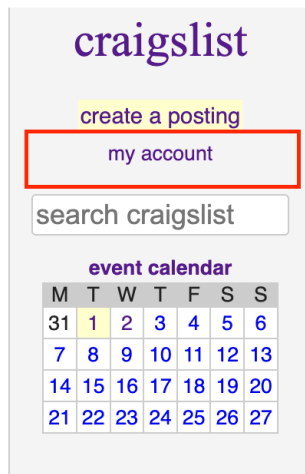


Fig 1

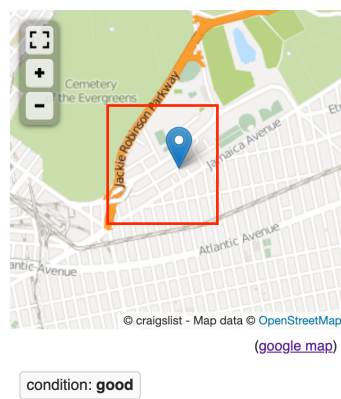


Fig 2



Fig 3

1. The home page does not display whether the user is logged in to their account.
2. Status of how many listings under each category is not clear.
3. Does not let you know when the 'hide post' action is complete. User has to manually track the total hidden posts count increase.
4. Status of Item sold/ unavailable is not displayed leading to broken links or sold posts which could cause frustration to users .
5. Does Not inform users of the wait time after posting an ad.
6. Although it shows post location, it doesn't tell about distance from the Users location which the user would have to do manually on another app.

Recommendations:

1. The 'my account' button should be placed on the top left or right of the home page. The button should also indicate if the user is logged in or not. If logged in, it should display a user icon along with the username of the account. When not logged in, the button should read "Sign-up/Login", instead of my account.

- When an ad has found a client/customer, it should indicate if the product/service is available/unavailable or be removed completely.

#2: Match between system and the real world

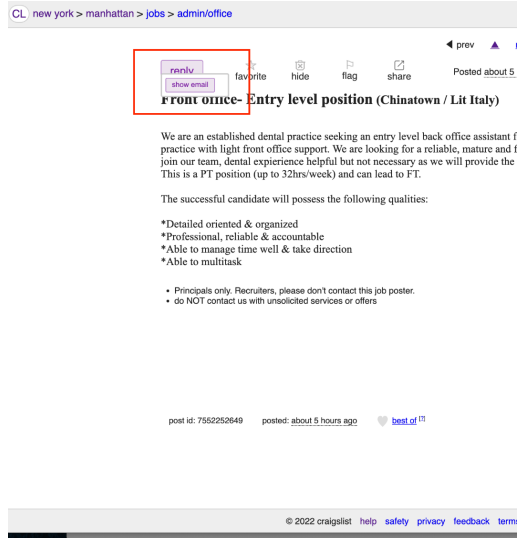


Fig 1

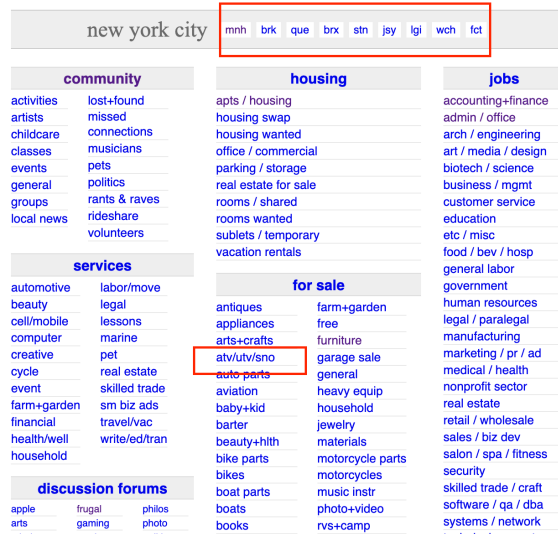


Fig 2

- Unrealistic names and uncommon abbreviations used in category headings which may cause confusion to users.
- Uncommon abbreviations for city locations
- Although a calendar is present on the homepage, it is unclear what it is used for.
- The reply button when applying for jobs does not let you reply but gives you an option for viewing the email address for the job poster, thus confusing the users with what they associate with 'reply'.

Recommendations:

- Instead of having many abbreviations for city names/districts squeezed into the top bar, a drop down menu with the names of the cities written in full would help clear up any confusion the users may have.
- The 'Event Calendar' should indicate what purpose it serves. It could have a heading that reads 'View Posting from date of preference' so that users know that the calendar helps filter ads from the dates they chose.

#3: User control and freedom



Fig 1

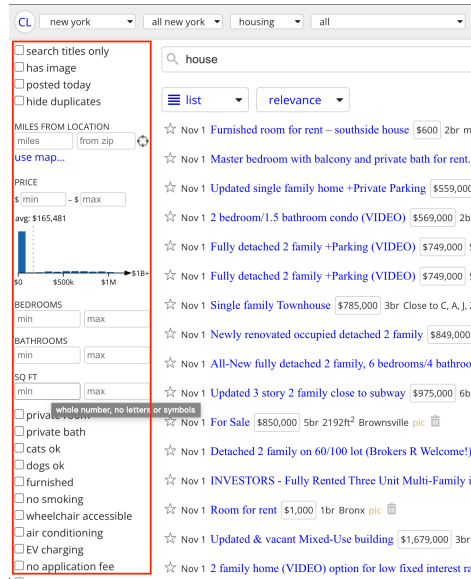


Fig 2

1. The help and about section are lost within the home page and not easy to find
2. Long list of filters means user has to put a lot of effort to choose filter searchers efficiently
3. No login button on home page making it hard to switch or create accounts
4. The users should have the freedom to hide the sub-categories they do not wish to view.

Recommendations:

1. There should be sub-categories in the filters section so that users do not need to scroll endlessly to search for the filter they want. Collapsible drop down menus for the sub-filters would help shorten the filter list.
2. Allwing users to hide and expand subcategories using drop down menus would reduce information clutter on the home page.

#4: Consistency and standards

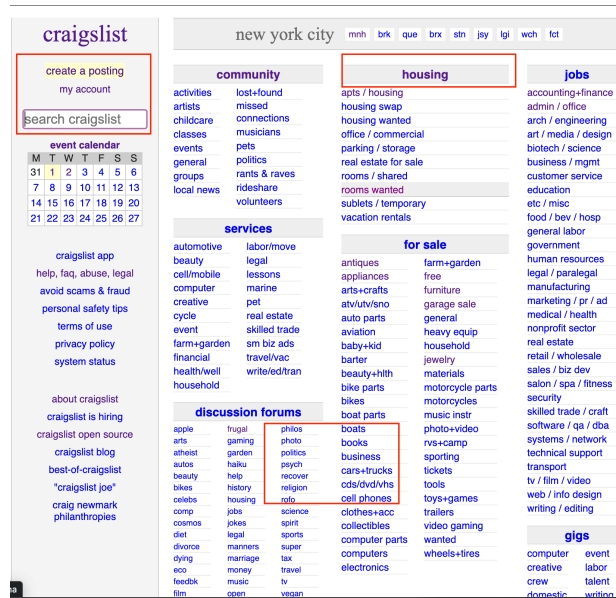


Fig 1

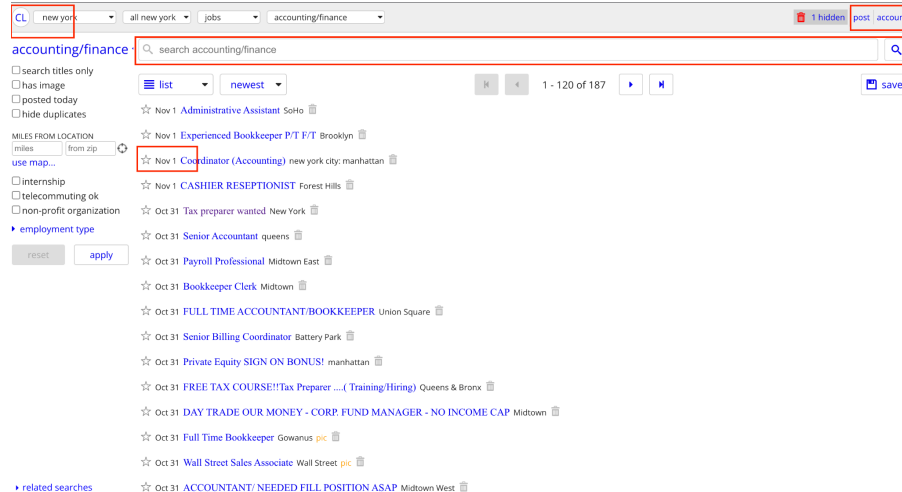


Fig 2

1. All links are hyperlinks (blue/purple text with underlining) and is not consistent with modern interfaces.
2. Main craigslist page does not have a login button, only regional ones do.
3. Inconsistent when switching screens.eg. The position of the users profile changes in the search page.

4. Low external consistency as no use of icons, small search bar on the left of the page instead of center.
5. Not consistent across different devices.
6. Forces users to learn page layout as it is inconsistent with modern web interfaces.
7. Help section not consistent across pages
8. Discrepancy when searching jobs in different locations

Recommendations:

1. Use standard icons to easy recognition for users
2. Creating hierarchy within categories and sub categories using Font sized and weight/
3. Show recommended listings according to previous searches.
4. The website should be made responsive so that there is consistency across all devices.
5. Using standard icons for users, homepage, postings could make it consistent with other websites.
6. The search bar is located at the top left which is inconsistent with many other websites that users are used to. Rather, the search bar should be placed at the center of the screen.

#5: Error prevention



Fig 1

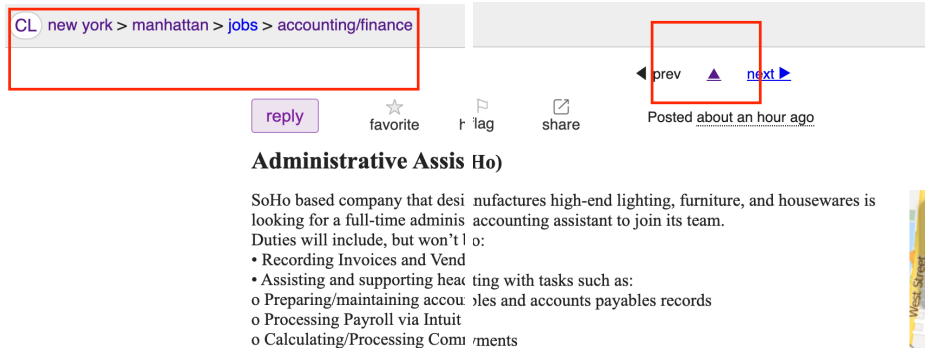
choose the location that fits best:

- ☐ manhattan
- ☐ brooklyn
- ☐ queens
- ☐ bronx
- ☐ staten island
- ☐ new jersey
- ☐ long island
- ☐ westchester
- ☐ fairfield co, CT

please note: your posting will also appear on the main **new york city** site.

continue

Fig 2



1. Clicking on the craigslist button leads to choosing a location page, which could be misleading.
2. When creating a posting, multiple choices are given and upon selection of a choice, the site automatically takes you to the next page, not giving users a chance to go over a choice and prevent an error.
3. When looking at a particular posting, 3 links (CL, state, City) all take you bak to the homepage which could cause eros when a use performs a particular task.

Recommendations:

1. Instead of having the city, category and listing displayed in the top right in the order they were clicked, these could be filters in a filter panel on the left and the right panel could reflect the listings according to the filters chosen by the user.
2. Each hyperlink should lead you to the appropriate webpage.
3. Buttons should have a label to indicate their function and prevent users from misinterpreting.
4. When a user wants to search for accounting jobs in Manhattan, NY, the, instead of taking the user to a new page when opening a post, it could open

#6: Recognition rather than recall

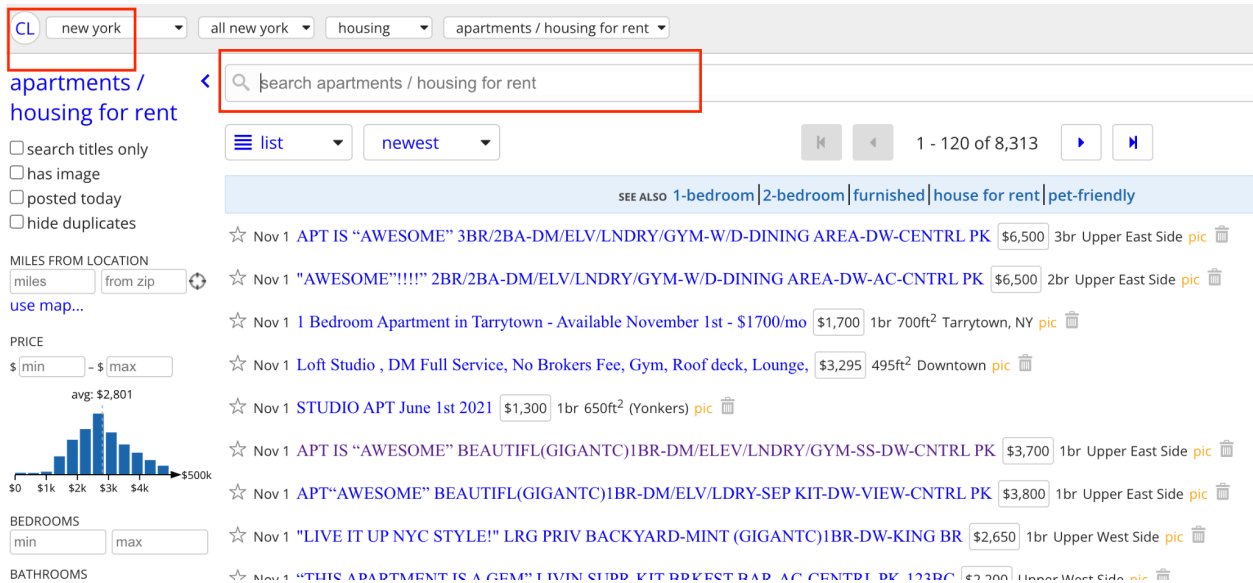


Fig 1

1. Homepage is recall dependent, lacking icons for recognition make it hard to choose categories.
2. The CL icon does not function as a recognizable home page icon.
3. The craigslist icon on the home page leads to choosing locations which requires the users to remember it each time.
4. Does not show previous searches, only saved searches, forcing users to remember previous actions.

Recommendations:

1. Using industry standard icons for home page to ease recognition.
2. Setting standard processes when searching across categories would free users from having to remember processes.
3. Maintaining the position of search bar, user profile and help section would free users from having to remember their position on each page.

#7: Flexibility and efficiency of use

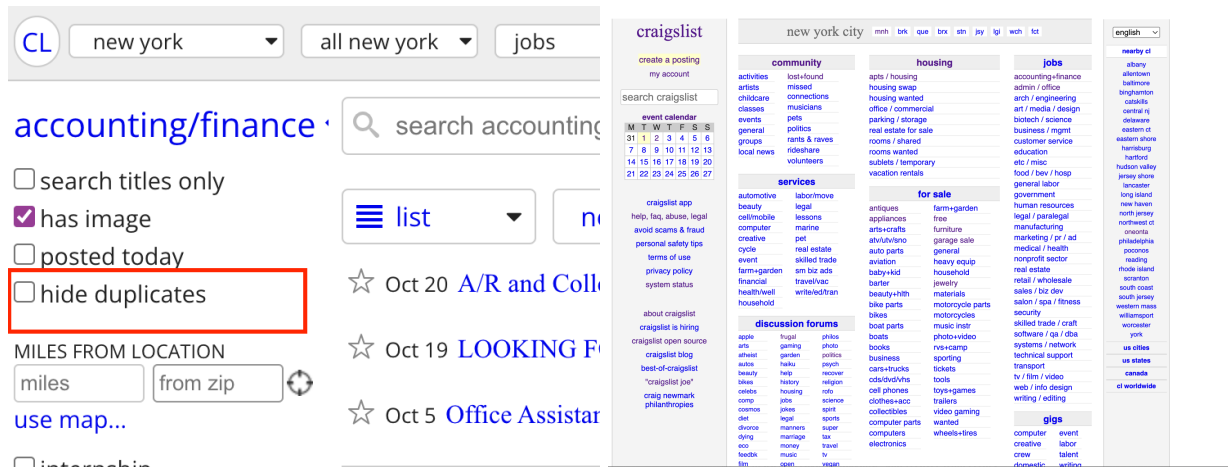


Fig 1

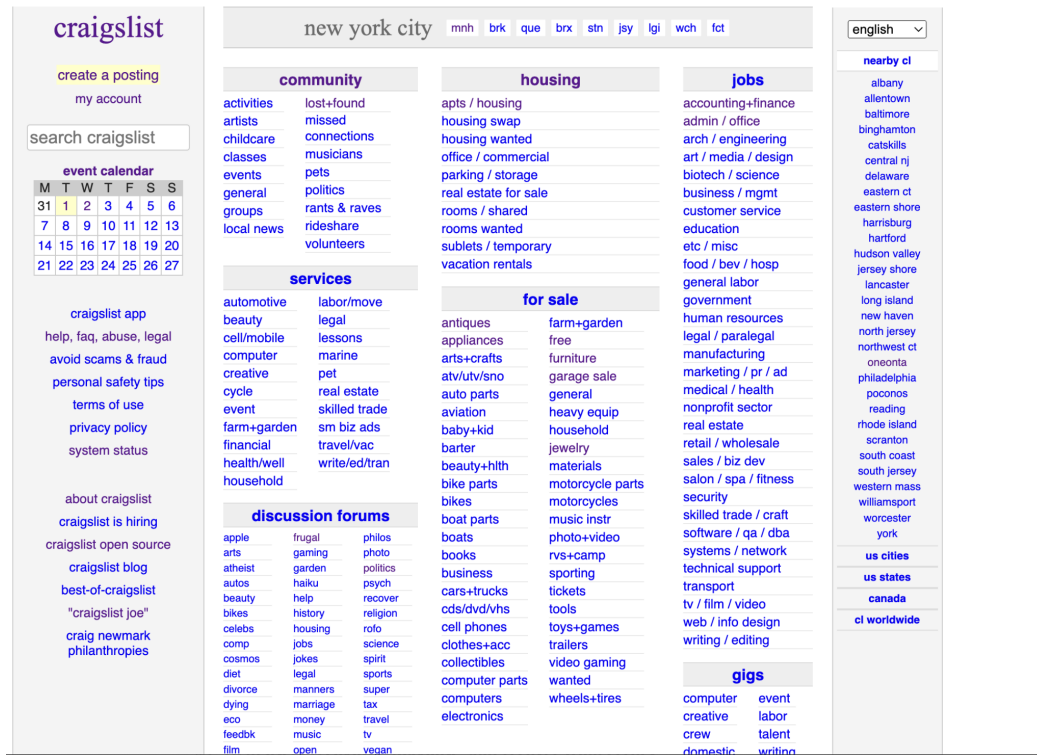
Fig 2

1. Information overload as there are lots of subcategories. Can get to where you want in one click, but it's a lot to read before the user figures out where to click.
2. Contact information is not visible in ads. 3 separate clicks are required to view a dialogue
3. Job applicants are unable upload resumes once to Craigslist and quickly apply to several jobs.
4. It's ambiguous what header the category you want is under nor what the actual name is (e.g. speakers vs. audio vs home electronics) which causes users to open wrong categories thus reducing efficiency.
- 5.
6. Users have to take an extra step to 'hide ' duplicate posts
7. Users have to scroll through 100 searches per page which decreases efficiency . there is no option to customize how many posts a user wants to view per page.

Recommendations:

1. Include a navigation bar on top to reduce time performing common tasks.
2. Personalized feed for saved searches that allows users to login and see ads directly based on their goal.
3. Appropriate hyperlinks could be added that allows users to directly contact sellers/employers

#8: Aesthetic and minimalist design



1. Aesthetic and minimal design
2. No clear hierarchy between headings and subheadings
3. The home page has too many links, making it hard for users to find the desired category.
4. In the left navigation bar, there is an Events Calendar although it is not clear what events are listed. As a result, users will not make full use of the calendar.
5. Cluttered, causing cognitive overload
6. No distinguishing features or separators
7. Lack of color scheme/ buttons/icons

Recommendations:

1. Using colors to establish brand identity and easy recognition & easy navigation
2. Use of buttons, icons, drop down menus to de clutter home page and improve navigation.
3. In the left navigation bar, the “help faqs abuse legal” button should be a) separated into individual buttons and b) moved to the bottom with the rest of what is currently the system status section.
4. Category headings should be aligned either towards the top of the page or on the left side so users can more easily find what they are looking for and not interspersed throughout the home page

#9: Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors

w york

choose the location that fits best:

- ☐ manhattan
- ☐ brooklyn
- ☐ queens
- ☐ bronx
- ☐ staten island
- ☐ new jersey
- ☐ long island
- ☐ westchester
- ☐ fairfield co, CT

please note: your posting will also appear on the main **new york city** site.

[continue](#)

-
1. When creating a posting, there is no back button to go to the previous step which prevents users from correcting a mistake, eg fixing a wrong location for a post.
 2. The choosing locations page, does not have any exit or back button leading to a dead end.
 3. There is apparently a minimum description length, but even after getting an error message the site didn't specify how long the description needed to be for the post to get through

Recommendations:

- Provide dialogue boxes to further describe the purpose of buttons
- provide appropriate back buttons to allow users to undo.
- re confirm important actions when publishing a post, for example, confirm location to prevent users from making errors.

#10: Help and documentation

Q: What if I get a "Default Mail Client Not Properly Installed" message?

A: Use one of the other options displayed by the "Reply" button

Q: How do craigslist 2-way relay email addresses work?

A: Replies to live posts are relayed to poster's email address. [Learn more.](#)

Q: I'm getting "message undeliverable" errors. What should I do?

A: Make sure (1) ad is still live, (2) address is correct, (3) no oversized attachments

Q: The reply button won't open.

A: We have received reports of the reply button not displaying a pop-up menu when clicked. Users have reported success in fixing this issue by taking either of these steps:

* Check the add-ons that are installed on your Internet browser. (An add-on is a browser extension, or a piece of software, that modifies the browsing experience.) You can view your browser's add-ons by navigating to the Tools or Preferences menu and clicking on Add-ons. You can disable any unfamiliar add-ons one by one until the button works.

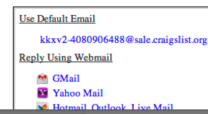
* Check to see if you are navigating the web using 'Private Browsing'. This setting can be found in the Preferences menu of your Internet browser. Unchecking this and re-starting your web browser may resolve the issue.

How to reply to craigslist postings

1. Click "Reply."

2. A window with response options will appear.

- To use your default mail program, **click the blue response link at the top.**
- If you use one of the listed webmail services, **click the corresponding icon.**



1. Steps provided are wordy and would require extensive reading
2. No logical order & difficult to navigate
3. Searching within the help page takes you an external website

Recommendations

1. Include categories within help section to organise information better.
2. Include a Search bar for finding quick solutions.
3. Use of colour to better highlight next steps and buttons to be clicked etc.
4. About section should be easier to find from home page, eg placed at the bottom with an appropriate colour and a known icon.

5 Methodological Reflection

5.1 Comparison: Expert Review & Usability Testing

Both tests helped me discover problems relating to the UI of the website that affected the ability of users to navigate the website. For example, Under the Minimal design heuristic, I identified that the website lacked the use of colour/icons/ visual hierarchy on the home page which caused information overload to users. The usability test further substantiated this claim as at least 2 used shortcuts such as (Cntrl+F) to search for words on the website as there was too much text on the home page. Users also struggled to find categories on the home page as they got lost among the 50+ other categories present.

5.2 Contrast: Expert Review vs. Usability Testing

While the findings did not conflict with one another, I discovered that the problems identified varied. The heuristic review helped cover the overall website broadly and Neilsons' heuristics helped me identify more problems related to the UI design of the website, for example, lack of consistency in font sizes or location of search bar across different pages. While the Usability testing helped me focus on the minute details that affect the usability of the website, for eg some search filters auto-applied when clicked on, but for some, you were required to select the filter and press the 'apply filters' button. The problem was only identified as I watched a participant struggle with a particular task.

5.3 Lessons Learned: Expert Review vs. Usability Testing

I felt both were effective in inspecting the usability of a website. The expert heuristic review allowed me to understand the key elements that one should keep in mind when designing an interface and act as a guide to improving the website. The Usability testing allowed me to see through the lens of users of various computing backgrounds, which allowed me to spot errors that someone from the field might have missed. It also allowed me to understand the various navigational paths users take that I instinctively would not have taken.